

Staff shortages jeopardising cancer plan, report warns

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Staff shortages in Scotland's NHS are jeopardising a £100 million plan to diagnose and treat cancer better, a damning report has found.

Holyrood's Cross Party Group on Cancer found huge problems with the Scottish Government's five-year strategy on the disease, now at the halfway point.

Among the concerns are the fact crucial tests are not taking place because of a lack of trained medics.

The report warns the strategy may not be fully implemented by the end of the current parliament in 2021.

And while elements of the plan were on course, the document stated, many of the vital points were well behind schedule because of low workforce numbers.

The Scottish Conservatives said this was the latest problem in the NHS created by the SNP's lack of workforce planning, which has resulted in record numbers of vacancies among nurses and consultants.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

"While there has been welcome progress in the implementation of the cancer strategy in a number of areas, this report highlights that there is still significant action needed to ensure it is fully implemented by March 2021.

"The SNP government has been warned for years about the dire consequences of poor workforce planning and the CPG inquiry highlights this neglect.

"If ministers continue to ignore these warnings, cancer patients across Scotland will pay the price.

"The Scottish Government now needs to show some leadership in the delivery of cancer services across Scotland if the SNP is actually going to meet the targets it has set out in the cancer strategy ahead of 2021."